DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 388 488 RC 020 341

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TITLE	Rural Development in the United States: Connecting Theory, Practice, and Possibilities.
REPORT NO	ISBN-1-55963-326-3
PUB DATE	95
NOTE	367p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Island Press, P.O. Box 7, Dept. 2PR, Covelo, CA 95428 ($32 plus $4.75 shipping).
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Action; Economic Change; *Economic Development; *Government Role; Institutional Cooperation; Literature Reviews; Politics; *Public Policy; Public Sector; *Role of Education; *Rural Development; Rural Economics; Rural Education; *Telecommunications
IDENTIFIERS	Global Economy; Infrastructure

ABSTRACT

This book synthesizes and analyzes much of the theoretical and practical literature on rural economic development and related issues from the past two decades with the aim of initiating construction of a new model for U.S. rural development policy. Part I emphasizes the national and global context within which U.S. rural development must take place. Chapters examine economic and social trends in rural America in the 1990s; core goals and features of development strategies; global economic change, Third World development, and implications for U.S. rural development; and strategies to overcome political, cultural, and economic obstacles to development. Part II examines in detail the long-term economic prospects of various rural sectors (natural resources, manufacturing, the service sector, tourism, the elderly, high technology, and telecommunications), as well as their impact on the multidimensional conceptualization of development offered in Part I. Several major propositions with implications for research and public policy are developed: (1) to avoid the pressures of international competition that tend to lower employment, rural communities must pursue substantially "nontraded" sectors (such as retirement, tourism, siting of government activities) that emphasize rural amenities; (2) the fiscal crisis in the public sphere will preclude large new rural programs and will require innovation in the nature of public action; (3) new technologies such as advanced telecommunications can substitute for geographic adjacency to urban areas and can lower barriers to rural economic participation; (4) small rural communities must break down political boundaries and form new cooperative political units for education and other public services; and (5) local communities and the federal government must embark on a new partnership to upgrade rural education and training. Contains over 350 references and an index. (SV)